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Ladies at Home

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THE MINOR DRAMA.

THE ACTING EDITION.

No. CXLVII.

LADIES AT HOME;

OR,

GENTLEMEN, WE CAN DO WITHOUT YOU.

A Female Interlude, in One Act.

BY J. G. MILLENGEN, M. D.,

Author of the "Bee-Hive."

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

A description of the Costume—Cast of the Characters—Entrances and Exits—
Relative Positions of the Performers on the Stage, and the whole of the
Stage Business.

AS PERFORMED AT THE

PRINCIPAL ENGLISH AND AMERICAN THEATRES.

NEW YORK:

SAMUEL FRENCH,

122 NASSAU STREET, (UP STAIRS.)

CAST OF THE CHARACTERS.—[LADIES AT HOME.]

Haymarket, London.

LADY ANTIDOTE,	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Davenport.
LADY LUCRETIA,	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Gibbs.
MRS. BANTER,	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Edwin.
MISS LAURA,	-	-	-	-	Miss Beaumont.
MRS. LENIENT,	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Conner.
MISS PRIM,	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Kendall.
MISS BUCKRAM,	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Liston.
JENNY, -	-	-	-	-	Mrs. T. Hill.

SCENE—A Country House of Lady Antidote.

Costumes of the day.

Time in Representation, forty minutes.

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SANTA BARBARA

LADIES AT HOME.

SCENE.—*A Chamber at LADY LUCRETIA'S ; a window, with a balcony, looking into the garden ; to the left a closet door ; on the R. a door, supposed to lead to the rest of the apartments.*

Lau. I hope my aunt and cousin are now satisfied. Not a man left in the house, or allowed to visit us, and all this, because poor Mr. Boville loves me, and because aunty says, I love him ; because, when he looks at me, I blush, and sigh : and when he does not look at me, I look at him—because—ah me !—I surely do not love him—because—cousin says, I should not, heigho !

Enter MRS. BANTER, R.

Mrs. B. “ What dost thou muse on, meditating maid ? ” Eh, Laura, always sighing, your poor birds forgotten ! your harp unstrung, your geraniums withered, your work neglected, and your dear eyes big with the starting tear. If these be not symptoms of love I'm not a widow.

Lau. Love indeed ! and with whom should poor Laura be in love ?

Mrs. B. I know not with whom you should be, but I know with whom you are. Come, entrust me with all your hopes and fears, and I promise you, dear girl, my assistance and advice.

Lau. You have no doubt heard, that my aunt and cousin politely insisted on Mr. Boville discontinuing his visits.

Mrs. B. I am acquainted with every particular, Lady Antidote and your prim cousin Lady Lucretia, like all prudes, would wish to condemn you to bend under the same yoke that galls them.

Lau. Prudes !—what's a prude, Mrs. Banter ?

Mrs. B. A prude, my gentle girl, is a nondescript animal, reserved when she's young, as she dares not run after a beau, and reserved when she's old, as no beau will run after her.

Lau. That's exactly aunty's and cousin's case, they scold me when I even look up when there are men in company.

Mrs. B. Because, men most likely look down on them, but I am preparing for Lady Lucretia a salutary lesson, which I trust will cure her of her affectation, and ensure your happiness.

Lau. My dearest friend, would you believe it? she has ordered me not even to stir out of the room without her, and all this because Mr. Boville wrote me a letter.

Mrs. B. A letter?

Lau. I presume, at least, it was for me, for he was going to hand it to me, when cousin snaped at it, and did so abuse poor dear Mr. Boville!—but here she comes. Mrs. Banter, do stand by me, and if she scolds, pray take my part.

Mrs. B. Fear nothing, dear child; a young girl who wants a husband, and a young widow who has no particular objection to try another, will always be a match for age and prudery

Enter LADY LUCRETIA, R.

Lady L. Well, Miss Laura, I hope that you have come to a proper sense of your shameful conduct.

Lau. Dear cousin, what have I done?

Lady L. What have you done, miss? unparalleled impudence! Is it nothing at your age, nay, at any age, to listen to the vile adulation of that viper, *Man*; to receive the romantic trash his odious pen has traced?

Mrs. B. Dear me, Lady Lucretia, a young man writes a few lines to a young girl, and one would think that Church and State were in danger.

Lau. I'm sure, cousin, there was nothing naughty in it.

Lady L. You are sure! And pray, miss, who made you a judge of what's naughty—what's the meaning of all this?

Mrs. B. Why, my lady, the purport is clear enough, though lovers now-a-days are not so laconic in their declarations as they should be. "Nothing like sympathy, madam. I love you, and if you love me, pull the bell, and send for the parson; but, madam, if I love you, and you don't love me, I'll pull the bell, and send for my horse"—that's coming to the point at once.

Lady L. Love you, love me! Mrs. Banter, I entertain the highest respect for you, but as my aunt, Lady Antidote, and I are responsible for this giddy child's education, we must prevent her from straying in those ways some folks find so delightful.

Mrs. B. [*aside.*] You shall pay dearly for some folks.

Lady L. Come, miss, to your room; and if ever we see you look at the men—

Lau. Why, the men will be looking at me.

Lady L. No more; to your room, and should Mr. Boville dare to approach this house we'll secure you in a place inaccessible to the temerity of his odious race. [*Exit LAURA, sobbing, R.*]

Mrs. B. I do not think, Lady Lucretia, that you will find severity of any use with that gentle girl.

Lady L. If the austerity of prudence is deemed severity, then Mrs. Banter am I glad to be called severe.

Mrs. B. The austerity of prudence! Believe me, austere as you think yourself, I shall some day see you in love, and disappointed.

Lady L. You may answer for your own heart, Mrs. Banter, but I cannot conceive by what authority you pretend to account for the feelings of mine.

Mrs. B. Nor can I conceive by what right your heart affects to be made of other stuff than your neighbors.

Lady L. Thank heaven it is.

Mrs. B. Suppose, now, a handsome, amiable, young man——

Lady L. I hate handsome men. In my opinion good looks are superfluous.

Mrs. B. Perhaps; but were I marrying I should have an eye to superfluities.

Lady L. Such affected wretches!

Mrs. B. Now there's my twin-brother, Augustus. [*Pointedly.*] I have often heard you say that he was charming.

Lady L. I have certainly said that—that he was good-looking, [*With embarrassment,*] but you know he is only a boy—a mere boy; besides, he is the very image of you, my dear Mrs. Banter, and I could not avoid transferring to him during your absence part of that sincere affection I entertain for you; besides I had commenced giving him a little moral advice.

Mrs. B. I assure you, madam, whatever you have told my young brother in your moral lessons, he talks of you so much by day that I dare swear he dreams of nothing else all night.

Lady L. [*Warmly.*] Dear boy! Does he indeed? He is so interesting. What a pity it would be were he to fall into evil hands.

Mrs. B. It would indeed. But I am surprised he is not yet here—he was so anxious to return, to avail himself of your kind admonitions.

Lady L. He shall be most welcome.

Mrs. B. What! although a man!

Lady L. A man! nonsense, he is but a boy—a mere child!

Mrs. B. He's not so young—we're exactly the same age, for the same hour gave birth to us both.

Lady L. I thought her at least ten years older. [*Aside.*] but here's my aunt with our friends.

Enter LADY ANTIDOTE, MRS. LENIENT, MISS PRIM, with a lap-dog and MISS BUCKRAM, R.

Lady A. My dear neice, where have you been?

Miss B. You have lost a great treat, a festival of virtue. Miss Prim has been giving us in the summer-house, a most elaborate lecture upon the evils of matrimony.

Lady L. I left you, ladies, to have a little talk with my imprudent cousin Laura; she has been so rash as to allow a young man to write to her!

Lady A. A man write to my neice! I'm petrified!

Miss P. Madam, you appal me!

Miss B. I'm thunderstruck!

Miss P. It's a melancholy thing that we have not in this loose country nunneries to immure such slippery young people in.

Mrs L. But, my dear ladies, how can we prevent a young man from paying us his addresses?

Miss P. Us!—not meaning me I hope madam.

Miss B. I should like to see one of your dandies paying his addresses to me!

Miss P. There is a dignified manner of repelling the rude attempts of these men: thus—Sir, pray what do you mean?

Lady A. Or,—Sir, sir, I do not conceive your impertinence!

Miss B. Or,—Sir, you labor under a miscomprehension, sir!

Lady A. You may laugh, ladies; but if any one of my family permitted the shadow of a little finger to cast an umbrage on their reputation, I would expunge their very name from the genealogy of the Antidotes! My niece shall never wed with my consent, no—never!

Mrs B. Yet, my Lady Antidote, you yourself were married three times.

Lady A. That madam, was the more effectually to convince myself of the superiority of a single life.

Lady L. Perhaps Mrs. Banter approves of Laura's having given permission to Mr. Boville.

Mrs B. My dear lady, men are apt to do whatever they like, whether permitted or not.

Mrs L. Oh! the wretches! so they are. Happy the woman who can set slander at defiance.

Lady A. I defy, it madam!

Miss P. So do I.

Miss B. And so do I.

Lady L. Let us not, ladies, pretend to dictate to others. I can only remark, that no female is exposed to calumny when by her manners she commands respect, silences insinuations, and keeps all men at bay.

[Exit, R.

Lady A. Do you not envy me, ladies, to have such a niece, such a paragon of super-excellence?

Mrs. B. Ah! your niece, like many others, may some day most innocently writhe under the fang of malice.

Lady A. My niece writhe under a fang, madam?

Mrs. L. We are all open to remark.

Lady A. My niece, madam, is only remarkable for her impregnable virtue!

Mrs B. No fortress is deemed impregnable until attacked.

Lady A. Attacked, madam! Lady Lucretia is unattackable; she would freeze a sunbeam if it dared to shine illicitly upon her!

Miss P. And so would I!

Miss B. And so would I! You quite shock me.

Mrs B. What! by saying that nothing can secure defenceless virtue from slander!

Miss P. Virtue, madam, is never defenceless, unless she pleases to lay down her arms. A virtuous woman's face, madam, should, like

my own, resemble the famed Medusa's head, and petrify impertinence
[Exit, R.

Miss B. If one of your gay deceivers had the audacity to look improperly on me, with one glance I'd make him fly to the deserts of Arabia—to the deserts of Arabia, madam! Men I detest! Give me my pussy and I'm satisfied.
[Exit, R.

Lady A. Indeed, Mrs Banter, your free mode of thinking is quite horrific!

Mrs. B. Because I maintain that frailty is the lot of mankind!

Lady A. Mankind! madam?—as I never meddle with matters that do not concern me you must also permit me to withdraw. [Exit, R.

Mrs. L. Indeed Mrs. Banter, this is too bad!

Mrs. B. Depend upon it things are bad enough when people pretend to be too good; but now that we are alone I must entrust you with a plan that I have conceived, and am immediately going to put into execution, and Jenny shall assist us.

Mrs. L. I fortunately am neither an old maid nor a prude, and shall assist you with all my heart.

Mrs. B. You know my twin brother Augustus?

Mrs. L. Perfectly, the very image of you.

Mrs. B. Well, availing myself of his absence, I dressed in his clothes, and was introduced to Lady Lucretia, who was long anxious to know him; she saw me, encouraged my frequent visits. With all her prudery she seemed to understand pretty well the language of the eyes, and I believe can manage pretty well my ocular telegraphs. She glanced, I glanced—glances brought on blushes, blushes sighs! She played the bashful, and I was as awkward, oh, as awkward as a schoolboy; in taking the chair I dropped my hat, in picking up my hat I dropped my gloves, in snatching at my gloves I upset a chair; she laughed; down went the hat again. Then I heaved a sigh! elaborated a sentimental tear in a downcast eye. In short, she soon imagined that I was smitten with her, and instead of dropping and picking up my hat in timid embarrassment, when I perceived that I had smitten her, I clapped it on a peg!

Mrs. L. Delightful! But what do you intend to do?

Mrs. B. Make her surrender, and cry for mercy!

Mrs. L. That's right, she is in your power; let your revenge be ample!

Mrs. B. Ample!—I am a woman, Mrs. Lenient, and she is—a prude.
]Exeunt, L,

Enter JENNY with a letter, L.

Jenny. So my mistress has not yet retired to her chamber? where can she be, as she is above the wicked things of this world as she calls it, I suppose she's in the garden looking after the comet! What a monstrous terrible house to be sure; oh! that I was ever born to come into it. Except a lame messenger, a deaf porter a blind coachman, and a drunken butler, no man's ever allowed in it! My old mistress says that love's all fudge, because she's as old as Gog and Magog. Young mistress says that love's ridiculous, but I've seen her hide

many a sly letter in her reticule. Oh, gemini! if I had but stayed with sweet Miss Kitty Cotton, after she had married that dear soldier officer, of the lancing folks. Oh, I'd now perhaps have been a lancer too! None of your periwigged pated old codgers for us, but a merry soldier, who tells all about storming and scaling; as how, before they batter away, all the young girls are sent out of the town, and all the old ladies stay at home to keep house and receive the visitors! Oh, gemini, 'tis pure work.

Enter LADY LUCRETIA, R.

Lady L. Jenny, quit my chamber.

Jenny. Here's a letter, my lady, from Mrs. Banter. She left the house all in tears—everybody must cry here, when no man's never allowed to come and laugh with us.

Lady L. Impertient hussey! quit my room.

Jenny. I wish the house was on fire, then we should be obliged to call in some men to put it out. *[Exit JENNY, L.]*

Lady L. So Mrs. Banter is offended. *[Reads.]* I am glad she is gone, her free manners are insupportable; yet I hope she won't be spiteful enough to prevent her brother coming here. Dear boy, I know not why, but when he is with me my antipathy to his sex is not half so strong. *[A guitar is heard under the window.]* What is this—it must be that insolent Boville playing under Laura's window. What are my gardeners, my servants about—I'll alarm the house. *[Runs to a bell upon the table, but as she is going to ring it singing is heard.]*

SONG.—*Without.*

Dared I declare I dearly love thee,
What language could my thoughts impart?
But let my silent actions prove thee,
The fond emotions of my heart!

Heavens! 'tis the voice of Augustus!—Is the boy mad—at this hour of the night. *[She runs and throws open the window, MRS. BANTER as AUGUSTUS, is discovered standing on the balcony.]* What do I see, sir! You here?

Mrs. B. *[With timidity.]* Yes, my lady, 'tis I. Your poor Augustus stands before you.

Lady L. Dare you presume to enter my apartment?

Mrs. B. *[Falling on her knees.]* If I have offended, at your feet I beg, I implore forgiveness!

Lady L. *[With emotion.]* At my feet; rise, sir. If any one were to come in—rise, I beg of you!

Mrs. B. Besides, I remarked, whenever I sat near you in company that all the ladies whispered and tittered.

Lady L. Well, sir?

Mrs. B. So I preferred a tete-a-tete—a drawing-room might have caused idle conversation—so I selected this chamber. In coming by day I might have been seen, so I came by night. Entering by the door the servants would have remarked me, so I came in by the win-

dow ; I was so anxious to receive some more of those kind moral lessons you used to give me.

Lady L. [*Pointing to the window.*] You have made a pretty use of them I must confess ; but are you certain no one saw you coming in ?

Mrs. B. I did not even intend to come in, merely to lay all night under your window—to hear your voice—to breathe the same air—to greet the morn that would wake you—instinctively I commenced repeating a few lines I wrote—then I saw a ladder—then—

Lady L. Those lines you sung—

Mrs. B. Were composed for you during my mournful vigils.

Lady L. Were there any more verses ?

Mrs. B. An hundred and seventy-three. I'll sing them to you all.

Lady L. No, no, not now ; you'd disturb the house ; but you shall read them.

Lady L. Shall I ! the garrison consents to a parley. [*Aside.*] I am so overjoyed ; such an emotion thrills through every vein—my head !

Lady L. He'll faint !—heavens, what's to be done !

Mrs. B. Oh, Lady Lucretia ! Lucretia ! Lady Lucretia, Oh !

[*She falls into LADY LUCRETIA'S arms, who supports her.*]

Lady L. Recover, I beseech you !

Mrs. B. Oh, my head !

Lady L. Dear Mr. Augustus !

Mrs. B. Oh, my head !

Lady L. Do not terrify me.

Mrs. B. My head, my head !

Lady L. Dear Augustus !—for my sake I entreat— dearest Augustus.
[*Fondly.*]

Mrs. B. Oh ! I am better now.

Lady L. Here ! take this smelling bottle. [*Gives a bottle.*]

Mrs. B. Besides, I was so apprehensive of meeting my sister here.

Lady L. Oh, she is gone. You have nothing to dread from her malice !

Mrs. B. She is very malicious !

Lady L. A silly creature—would you believe it, the woman is so vain that she thinks herself the image of you ?

Mrs. B. Silly creaturo indeed ! not the least likeness.

Lady L. Not the least—your countenance is open, candid, honest—her's is full of guile and deceit !

Mrs. B. [*Returning the bottle.*] Many thanks for your kindness, my lady. Can I believe my eyes !—you deigning to lean over your poor pupil—your poor Augustus ! Oh ! joys like these too soon, too soon must fleet !

[*Kisses her hand.—Bell rings, R.*]

Lady L. Heaven !—the supper bell !—you must begone—I must go down to supper.

Mrs. B. You must go to supper !—Oh ! for you I could live without supper all my life time ! Cruel woman !

Lady L. You are not aware of the danger you expose me to—I must attend the supper table.

Mrs. B. How hungry you must be—all the family are down already, and that door—

Lady L. Well, sir!

Mrs. B. It can lock, can't it?

Lady L. What then, sir?

Mrs. B. Why then here goes—[*Runs and shuts the door.*]*—there!*

Lady L. What, sir, you have the audacity to lock my door?

Mrs. B. [*Aside.*] So, she thinks it's bolted; believe me the purity of my sentiments are such—my love— [Kneels.

Lady L. [*Indignantly.*] Your love, sir?—never, never let that odious word *love* escape your lips.

Mrs. B. Oh! that I cannot promise.

Lady L. Then quit the house instantly, sir!

Mrs. B. Cruel woman!—my fate is in your hands!—no power on earth shall dare prevent me from adoring you; and should human efforts tear me from you, thus shall I rescue myself from their oppression. [Draws a pistol.

Lady L. A pistol!

Mrs. B. Loaded to the muzzle with slugs and bullets!

Lady L. The boy is mad!—rise, rise I entreat.

Mrs. B. Then say you do not hate me.

Lady L. Hate you, Augustus! Is that possible?

Mrs. B. Then you do love me?—

Lady L. How can I reply?

Mrs. B. Then you detest, abhor, abominate, execrate me!—farewell for ever!

[*Runs to the window—LADY LUCRETIA follows, and holds her.*

Lady L. Hold! in mercy's name!

Mrs. B. No more—farewell, farewell!

Lady L. Then I—I do love you!

Mrs. B. Dearly?

Lady L. Dearly, Augustus, dearly—

Enter JENNY, L.

Jenny. My lady, supper, ah! [*Shrieks.*] a man—a man! don't look at me—a man! a man!—

Mrs. B. Oh, Lucretia! we're undone!

Jenny. Thieves! murder! a man!

Lady L. Silence, Jenny; I order you!

Jenny. Housebreaking and burglary! murder! a man!

Lady L. Silence, my dearest Jenny, I beg of you. [Gives a purse.

Jenny. I am silent, but a man! don't look at me.

Lady L. 'Tis all—'tis all a joke! an innocent joke.

Jenny. A joke with a man! oh gemini!

Lady L. [*Aside.*] A good thought! I have it. I'll pretend 'tis Mrs. Banter in her brother's clothes. A man! why you silly creature, ha, ha, ha! 'tis a woman.

Jenny. A woman!

Lady L. To be sure, Mrs. Banter, in her brother's clothes.

Mrs. R. [*Aside.*] Well done cunning.

Lady L. [*Aside to MRS. BANTER.*] Pray humor the deceit. You

have heard of the strong resemblance between her and her brother, and by dressing my good friend Mrs. Banter in his clothes we were preparing a surprise for the ladies after supper.

Jenny. Oh gemini! I'd have taken you, sir,—pardon me, ma'am, for as pure a gentleman as ever took maid or widow in—to church, Dear me, dear me, let's go down.

Lady L. That's impossible.

Jenny. Eh, I see! hem, all would be up if we went down; but how did the lady get in?

Lady L. Why she, she left her carriage—

Mrs. B. At the entrance of the avenue; and by way of a short cut I came in at the window.

Lady L. You had better go the way you came. [*Aside.*]

Mrs. B. [*Aside.*] I forgot to tell you, my lady, I upset the ladder!

Lady L. How unfortunate! Hark'ye, Jenny—Jenny, my dear Jenny, when the company have withdrawn you must contrive to get Mrs. Banter out unnoticed. But an idea strikes me—we are about the same size—into this closet, and put on one of my gowns.

Mrs. B. Oh, my lady—I'd do anything for you; but to turn woman, oh!

Lady L. Nonsense, in with you.

Jenny. In with you—I'll help you.

Lady L. You'll help! impudent girl.

Mrs. B. But modesty, modesty!

Lady L. Modesty, trash!—a pretty time to talk of modesty, when my reputation's at stake; in with you, in with you.

[*MRS. BANTER goes into the closet, JENNY anxiously endeavors to follow her; but LADY LUCRETIA prevents her—pause—JENNY goes to the door and peeps through the keyhole—LADY LUCRETIA perceives her and drives her away.*]

Jenny. Oh, I must help her.

Mrs. B. [*In the closet.*] Where are my stays.

Jenny. I'll lace them.

[*Going to door.*]

Lady L. [*Drives her away.*] You lace them, indeed!

Mrs. B. [*Coming from the closet in woman's clothes.*] Oh! what shall I do, I'm so awkward!

Lady L. Now, quick—the coat and hat under the sofa.

[*Noise without.*]

Jenny. Oh, gemini; here are the ladies!

Lady L. Now, sir, in mercy's name be discreet.

Mrs. B. What will become of me! don't let 'em kick me down stairs.

Lady L. Be as womanish as you can, and hold your tongue.

Mrs. B. That's not very womanish either.

Lady L. Distraction! Be as silent as you can, and leave all to me.

Enter LADY ANTIDOTE, MRS. LENIENT, MISS PRIM, and MISS BUCKRAM, each with a bed room candle, R.

Lady A. Walk in ladies, walk in.

Lady L. Mrs. Banter, dear aunt is just returned.

All. Mrs Banter!

Mrs. Len. My dear Mrs. Banter, what brought you back so soon?

Mrs. B. [*Awkwardly.*] Why, madam—because—do you see—because—

Lady L. Let me explain. My good friend was so anxious to make up our silly dispute of this evening, that she immediately returned in private.

Mrs. B. Now we are friends for ever, but I must leave you, farewell.

Lady L. Farewell, my dearest Mrs. Banter!

Mrs. B. Adieu, ladies—adieu.

[*Exit, R.*]

Lady A. Now, ladies, I hope you are all convinced of the impotence of scandal!

Lady L. What now, aunt?

Lady A. Yes, virtuous niece, scarce had supper been concluded when an anonymous note was handed in, purporting that you were tete-a-tete in your room with a young man!

Mrs. Len. [*Pulling the coat and hat from under the sofa.*] But what is all this?

Lady L. [*Aside.*] What's to be done now!

Miss B. A man's coat! let me go.

Miss P. It signifies not—if there's a man in the house were I to walk barefooted I'd leave it!

Lady L. Ha, ha, ha!

Lady A. You laugh, Lady Lucretia; recollect you are my niece, and this is no matter for laughter!

Miss P. No, indeed—a man's hat!

Miss B. And a man's coat.

Miss P. Aye, the Lord knows what else may be found!

Miss B. Aye, to be sure! Heaven knows what the fellow may not have left behind him!

Lady L. Ha! ha! Your alarm amuses me. Here, Jenny, Jenny—explain to these astonished ladies the cause of their terrors. Ha, ha! be indiscreet at your peril.

[*Aside.*]

Jenny. This coat, ladies—ha, ha, ha! 'tis all a joke, my lady and Mrs. Banter were to have played yon after supper. This coat belongs to Mrs. Banter's brother—and as saving your ladyships' presence—he is as like her as two peas. Bless them! The brother was to have passed for the sister—I meant the sister for the brother—and you were all to have been hugely astonished!—and—that's all I know.

[*Exit, JENNY L.*]

Lady A. I hope this is satisfactory.

Miss B. [*Aside to Miss PRIM.*] Humph! I have my suspicions!

Mrs. L. [*Aside to Miss BUCKRAM.*] I can perceive these matters without spectacles!

Mrs. L. [*Taking up the coat.*] This odious coat under the sofa certainly looked rather suspicious—[*aside, throwing the coat into the closet*!—and shall be more suspicious still!

Lady A. Appearance, ladies, can never injure my lamb!

MRS. BANTER *re-enters by the window, and glides into the closet.*

Lady L. Well, ladies, I trust that you are now convinced of the injustice of your suspicions.

Lady A. All that I can say is, that whoever has, does, or shall asperse you, my niece—has, does, and shall have aspersed, and asperses, the inaspersible house of the Antidotes!

Mrs. L. Good night, Lady Lucretia; a pleasant slumber!

Miss P. Good night, Lady Lucretia; pleasing visions!

Miss B. Good night, Lady Lucretia; agreeable dreams?

MRS. BANTER *rushes out of the closet as* AUGUSTUS.

Mrs. B. Hold, ladies, hold!

Miss P. and Miss B. A man! a man!

Lady A. Don't come near me!

Lady L. Heavens! The boy is deranged!

Mrs. B. Ladies, were I to remain longer silent and concealed I should not be acting the part of a man of honor—of morality!

Miss P. Pretty morality! Oh, you highwayman, keep off!

Miss B. Stand off! how vicious he looks!

Mrs. B. Yes, ladies! I—I alone am culpable. Blinded by a fatal passion, which Lady Lucretia's prudence condemned, distraction and disappointed love led me to anything.

Lady L. Well, sir; I now trust that you are convinced of the rashness of your expectations. The respect I owe your sister alone prevented me from revealing your sex; when you should have met with that chastisement your temerity deserved.

Enter JENNY, L.

Jenny. Mrs. Banter's just arrived. She is come in a carriage and four, looking for her little brother!

Mrs. B. My sister!—do not tell her anything. Where shall I fly to?
[*Runs off, JENNY follows, L.*]

Lady A. Well, ladies; you see that the purity of the Antidotes will always rise triumphant!

Lady L. After your attempts to injure my character, ladies, I rejoice that you have witnessed this last scene.

Mrs. L. Yet you will confess that appearances were against you; and that, spite of her innocence, poor woman can be torn to pieces by prudes and antiquated dames!

Miss P. Well, Miss Buckram, I told you 'twas a man!—ah! he looked so treacherous—so sly!

Miss B. Aye, just like my Tammy, when he's watching a cock-sparrow.

Enter JENNY, L.

Jenny. Oh, ladies! oh, ladies!

Lady A. What's the matter now?

Lady L. What ails the girl?

Miss P. More men, no doubt.

Jenny. [*Crying.*] Oh, Lady Antidote!

Lady A. Well?

Lady L. Speak, in mercy's name!

Miss P. The girl's mad!

Jenny. And you, my Lady Lucretia, don't go near the fish-pond—oh! we'll have a coroner's inquest—oh, oh!

Miss B. No coroner, judge, or jury, unless of matrons, shall enter the house while I am in it!

Jenny. Oh, Mr. Augustus! Mr. Augustus! Who would have thought——

Lady L. Heaven! Is the boy drowned?

Jenny. I wish he was drowned, for poor Miss Laura's sake!

Lady A. Laura! What of Laura?

Jenny. Oh! that Mr. Augustus—though he is but a little bit of a man, instead of going out when his sister came in, up he whips——

Lady A. Whips what? Speak——

Jenny. Miss Laura—oh! oh!

Lady L. Laura—distraction! Where is she?

Jenny. In her room, locked up with Mr. Augustus!

Lady L. Oh! the perfidious monster!

Miss P. Here's a pretty family!

Lady L. Laura! Laura!

Miss B. Call the police.

Miss P. } Police! murder! police—watch! assault! battery!

Miss B. } police!

Enter MRS. BANTER, holding LAURA by the hand, L.

Mrs. B. Ladies, be not alarmed. Laura is under my protection. I beg your pardon for this unseasonable intrusion, but having heard that my young brother Augustus had left our house, on his way here, I came to ascertain the truth of the report.

Lady L. Your brother, madam, has been here, but uninvited by me. I cannot account for his visit; yet his prompt and disgraceful expulsion from this house must have convinced him that whatever opinion he might have formed of me, from *your* obliging reports, they were founded on error, if not on malice.

Mrs. B. This bitter attack, my lady, will compel me to give publicity to a gentle lesson which in charity I had reserved for your private ear.

Lady L. Madam, I do not understand.

Mrs. B. My brother, perhaps, will understand you better. His countenance is open, candid, and honest, while mine is full of guile and deceit.

Lady L. What do I hear?

Mrs. B. Your poor Augustus stands before you.

[*General surprise.*]

Lady L. [*c. r.*] You have given me a cruel lesson.

Mrs. B. [*c.*] Friendship shall seal my lips if you consent to this dear girl's happiness.

Lau. [*r. c.*] Dear cousin, do forgive me.

Lady A. [R.] She has my consent.

Mrs L. Not a word shall *I* reveal.

Lau. And whatever those other old ladies say no one will believe them.

Miss P. [L.] Impudent hussey!

Miss B. [L. c.] Insolent minx! I'll forbid the banns!

Miss B. Come, Lady Lucretia, [*to LADY LUCRETIA,*] let us be friends, and confess that [*to the AUDIENCE,*] gentlemen, dear gentlemen, we *cannot* do without you, therefore we hope the ladies will be permitted to receive you at home—to-morrow.

LADY A. LAURA. LADY L. MRS. B. MRS. L. MISS P. MISS B.

R.

L.

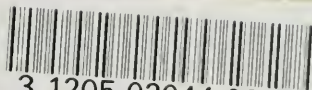
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